

Glendale, Arizona,
Rte. 1, #879-A,
January 31, 1942

Almanac Singers,
New York City.

Dear Brothers,

Here are some verses I wrote last October about the cotton pickers here. Perhaps you may find them usable.

Fraternally yours,
Marion C. Reynolds

THE ONES WHO PICK THE COTTON ARE IN RAGS

I travel out each morning as the sun is coming up
Through the cotton fields that stretch for mile on mile.
And I see the cotton pickers gather for their daily toil,
As from their battered cars and trucks they pile.

Then they stamp around the edges of the muddy cotton fields,
For there's too much moisture now to fill their bags.
And I notice as they wait there for the sun to dry the damp
That the ones who pick the cotton are in rags.

They must take along their women and the little children, too,
For the little ones can help to fill a sack.
And when the season's ended and there's nothing else to do
They can hunger while they rest their aching backs.

Oh, it's early in the morning for little sleepy heads,
And their weary bodies early start to sag.
~~But~~ There's money in that cotton -- if you never pick a boll --
But the ones who pick the cotton go in rags.

'Twas to gather cotton pickers that the old time slave ships sailed
From out our bays to Africa's sunny strand.
And the slave whip of the driver marked the course of every bale
As the cotton acres spread across the land.

'Twas early in the morning that the crews were routed out
With a whip lash for the weary ones that lag.
And the gentlemen and ladies lolled in silks and satins fine
While their hands who icked the cotton went in rags.

There was blood upon the cotton (though the fields were snowy white)
From a million slaves who worked in days of yore,
Till at last the sword and musket in a fratricidal strife
Drew enough to help to even up the score.

Oh, it's early in the morning when the frost is on the ground.
You won't make enough to eat on if you lag.
There we're picking tons of cotton throughout our weary lives,
Yet we and all our brothers go in rags.

But sometime the day is coming when we'll get our just reward
For the bales and bales we've picked them heretofore.
And it won't be like their hoping, as they rake the profits in,
They can settle with us on that other shore.

Over

COTTON FEVER

From the Towsack Tattler, Arvin FSA camp, summer, 1939. By "a camper"

Along the road on either side
Cotton's green and twomiles wide.
Fields fan out in rowsstring-straight,
And a boll flings out his wadded bait,
And grins at me and seems to say,
"You'll bea-grabbin at me one day
At six bits a hundred weight."

Then the bolls started rustling, shouting in the air
Just like as if they was callin' of a square:
"Chase that possum, chase tha coon,
Chase that cotton boll 'round the moon.
Crawl down a row and stand up straight,
on a six-bit whirl for a hundred weight.
Hunker on along and grab 'er all around,
Paying the man for the use of his ground.
Lint's heaped up and a recordyield;
Gin's chuck full so gin 'er in the field.
You can live on the land till the day you die --
Just as ~~xxx~~ long as you leave when the crop's laid by.
So pick 'er on down to the endin the gloam,
Then swing up your sack and promenade home.
Meet your baby, pat him on the head,
Feed him white beans and a piece of cornbread.
No need to worry, he'll go ~~xxx~~ freight,
At jus' six-bits a hundred weight."

So I mosey on down the hill,
Cotton bolls a-callin' still:
"At long row's end the boxx man wait,
Nail you up in a wooden crate.
At six-bits a hundred, livin's hard,
But dyin's dear in the county ~~xxx~~ yard --
At twenty-five bucks a hundred wieght."

the ones who pick the cotton are in rage (cont.)

Oh, it's early in the morning, and the sun is shining bright.
There are other things to fill besides ^{the} these bags.
Go, whisper to your brothers where ~~xxx~~ meeting is tonight
For the ones who pick the cotton who wear rags.

We must live along the ditch banks in our tents and hovels bare
And when we're broke, they simply call us vags.
But when we get our union, we will get a fairer share
For the ones that pick the cotton are in rags.